



MEDIA RELEASE

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Coconino County Sheriff's Office to Suspend Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) Program

Flagstaff, AZ – It is with deep regret that the Coconino County Sheriff's Office will be suspending the DARE / School Resource Officer program. This difficult decision was recently made as the Sheriff's Office has been reviewing programs and their budgetary impacts. "In these times of extreme budget issues statewide, we are trying to do everything we can to be a part of the budget solution," said Sheriff Bill Pribil. "We have performed DARE and similar programs for over twenty years in partnership with our schools. Unfortunately, federal, state, and local cuts all have an impact on the services we provide. It means we must make difficult decisions about some of our programs in order to preserve funding for vital public safety services."

Schools that will be affected by this cut include Cromer Elementary, Leupp Public Schools, and Maine Consolidated Schools where each year students in the fifth grade participate in DARE. Sheriff Pribil shared the following thoughts with the principals of these schools, "We strongly value the opportunities we have had to work with your staff and students over the years. We believe we have developed strong partnerships between our young community members and law enforcement through the DARE Program / School Resource Officer. We hope that life skills on how to avoid involvement with drugs, alcohol, gangs and violence can still be provided to the students through school mentors and parents."

The Sheriff's Office also has been working on budget solutions through other avenues such as freezing positions that become vacant through employee turnover, working on mileage cost solutions, and discontinuing the Mounted Unit program. The Sheriff's Office continues to work with the County Manager on other budget solutions to the current budget crisis.

"While we are eliminating programs such as DARE, we want to maintain our partnership with schools and the people in our communities. We will continue to be involved in community meetings and public outreach events as much as possible but our future participation in these also may be affected by budget reductions," stated Sheriff Pribil.

Despite the necessity to make these difficult budget related decisions, Sheriff Bill Pribil and the men and women of the Coconino County Sheriff's Office remain committed to providing a high quality of public safety services and maintaining partnerships with the community.